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AN EDUCATIONAL CULTURE-BOUILLON¹

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Dove avete trovato, Messer Lodovico, tante corbellerie? If the dazed reader were to put to President Hall the discourteous question with which Cardinal Ippolito received the *Orlando Furioso*, he would find his answer in the words of the introduction: "For twenty-five years I have lectured Saturday mornings to teachers and to students upon education. . . . During these years I find that I have given over seven hundred outside addresses on educational subjects . . . and written several score of magazine articles." The book is a compilation, a recasting, or, as the author would style it, a "conflation," of all this material and much more taken from printed and unprinted theses of students. Its unity is that of President Hall's multifarious interests, discursive reading, and uncorrelated opinions. The chapters have no other logical bond of connection. It is 1,400 pages of miscellaneous information and comment on every conceivable topic associated with education in any of its phases—the whole conveyed in a verbose, but readable, style, and in a diction curiously compounded of journalese and the most grotesque neologisms of the social and psychological sciences. The method by which the book is swollen to these dimensions was foreseen and aptly described by the Greek logicians: "An argument

¹ *Educational Problems.* By G. Stanley Hall., Ph.D., LL.D., New York and London: D. Appleton & Co., 1911. 2 vols. Pp. xiii+710+714.

may be expanded to infinity by the redundant interpolation of supererogatory propositions in the premises, as for example: 'If it is day it is light; but it is day, and virtue is also excellent. Therefore it is light.'"¹

President Hall's favorite ideas are of course emphasized throughout: child-study the co-ordinating center, not only of education, but of all the social sciences; the primacy of feeling over thought; the blighting effects of accuracy on the expansion of the youthful soul, and the special harmfulness of Latin; industrial education; the education of the larger muscles; flogging for contumacious boys; the segregated education of women; and, penetrating and suffusing all, the steaming miasma of his morbid preoccupation with sex.

Apart from these and similar recurrent *Leitmotive* the book offers little occasion for nicely discriminating assent or dissent. All doctrines find expression in it, and rhetorical elaboration. President Hall has at one time or another picked up and adopted all current ideas, notions, and formulas, including those of his opponents. But his Emersonian indifference to co-ordination and subordination and what the commonplace logical mind calls consistency has no parallel except in the babble of the high-school girls, whose engaging prattle he reports at more than sufficient length. At the very beginning the word *kindergarten* shunts him off on a three- or four-page rhapsody about children and gardens. The casual and uninhibited association of ideas is his principle of sufficient reason. In Vol. II, p. 331, he complains of the reporter who attributed to him the view that "girls of sixteen are utterly irreligious." But the reporter was surely excusable if he had read the statement on p. 20 that the "tendron" is by nature almost utterly unreligious. Of course if "tendron" is the scientific designation of girls between twelve and fourteen, the inconsistency may be explained away. But the last girl mentioned was "a charming miss of fifteen," who in place of the "desiccated herbarium

¹ Sextus Empiricus *adv. Math.* viii. 429: κατὰ δὲ παρολκῆν ἀπέραντος γίνεται ὁ λόγος δταν ἔξωθεν τι καὶ περισσῶς παραλαμβάνεται τοῖς λήμμασι, καθάπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ οὐτως ἔχοντος "εἰ ἡμέρα ἔστι, φῶς ἔστιν · ἀλλὰ μὴν ἡμέρα ἔστιν · ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ ὥφελεῖ · φῶς δρα ἔστιν." Of course ἀπέραντος is equivocal. I take the meaning that suits the present context.

knowledge" and the "exactness and thoroughness which is the pedagogue's fetish" had responded to the teaching of botany with the more "humanistic and vital," the more "naïve and natural reaction" that the study of a "flower marriage" is improper. How was the reporter to know that religion set in one year later?

I have been rebuked¹ for making light of the great movement for the scientific study of education, against the tidal advancement of which persiflage is as impotent as Mrs. Partington's broom. That the ultimate issue of these pioneer efforts will be a science of education I neither affirm nor deny—being no prophet. But in the interest of sober and cautious investigators, as well as for the protection of a gullible public, there will long be occasion for the humbler service of protestants who decline to be gulled.

"The psychology of giggling, so far as it has been investigated, shows that it has many causes. . . . A number of our observers testify that it is intensified by the presence or even the approach at a distance of a boy."² Our psychological, sociological, and pedagogical friends must stop printing this sort of thing if they expect to be taken seriously by their colleagues in scholarship and the physical sciences. They must not turn one face to the public and another to us. Since the publication of my protest against the abuse of the dogma that generalized mental discipline is a myth,³ I have repeatedly been told that if I had not been a mere amateur in psychological literature I should have been aware that the latest experiments, properly interpreted, confirm my view. As Hazlitt once observed in a similar case, it is hard to find one's self in the right after all. As it happens, I was familiar with and alluded to some of these experiments. But my point was, first, that as yet all experiments are too simple to decide so complicated an issue, and second, that an overwhelming majority of recent writers on education do not scruple to tell the public that science has spoken, and that the disciplinary values of, e.g., algebra and Latin have been disproved in the laboratory. In the work before me, for example, President Hall says (Vol. II, p. 653): "Once it

¹ See *School and Home Education*, December, 1911, p. 135.

² Vol. II, pp. 17-18.

³ *School Review*, Vol. XVIII, p. 607.

was thought that this process gave a generalized type of ability or general culture, but the very existence of such a thing is now disputed by the psychologists. . . . Thus the last stronghold of the apologists of Latin on its present basis is shattered." It is true that on p. 276, writing of modern languages and of the vernacular, he says that "the habit of normal idiomatic expression developed in one language helps the other, and that thus the linguistic soil is loosened and fertilized."¹ But the public cannot be expected to compare the two passages and note the contradiction. For the public reads as President Hall himself reads, and would have us teach our students to read in English departments freed from the yoke of the classics, both English and Latin, "very extensively and cursorily" (p. 655) that the soul may absorb "suggestions, typical facts in a vague and unaccountable way" (p. 651). Does he really suppose that this natural human slackness needs to be encouraged in the American undergraduate? "Young people," he says, "are just in the stage when they will profit most by the kind of instruction now given by those many ladies who describe the works of leading living writers of fiction. . . . The souls of even girls would expand under the tuition of those who read and comment on Tennyson, Shakespeare, and even tell about Ibsen and his work" (Vol. II, p. 656). But is it quite certain that the chief function of the school is to "vastate the soul" and enlarge the "alghedonic diameter" of even girls? Something may perhaps be left for the home, the Sunday school, and the extension lecture.

The real cause of the present misunderstanding between the representatives of pedagogy and their colleagues of the liberal arts is well stated in the admirable first sentence of President Hall's book: "The more advanced the student and the more specialized the teaching, the less pedagogy and genetic educational philosophy figure." It is undoubtedly true that our exclusive concern with maturer students and more advanced subjects tends to blunt our perception of the necessity for systematic generalizing study of method and organization and correlation in the teaching of the

¹ It would be precisely in the manner of President Hall's method of reasoning from metaphors for me to argue here that a dead language is the best fertilizer. See his portentous elaboration of the dead-language figure, Vol. II, p. 256.

young. But it is equally true that, starting from this reasonable presumption, the professional students of education have magnified their office and enlarged their claims beyond all reason. It is not to be expected that we should renounce all the lessons of our own observation and experience and reject all the presuppositions of common-sense at the first challenge of sciences which, so far as they have yet taken shape in formal treatises, remind President Hall himself of the "barber's apprentice who became a master workman when he could whip up two ounces of soap into two barrels of lather." The ground must be fought over inch by inch until these pretensions are abated within reasonable limits. Professor Paul Hanus, for example, once gravely deplored the fact that the history of education is not taught in high schools. But which of the "sciences" is competent to contradict the immediate perception of the trained scholar and historian that the history of education would simply muddle the mind of the high-school student and could serve no end but that of the dogmatic propaganda of disputable doctrines? It is in its very nature a "post-graduate" study. Very few collegiate students are prepared either to make or to follow intelligently such a cross-section of the history of civilization as the special study of the history of education requires.

This review threatens to be as discursive as its subject. I cannot test President Hall's analysis of the "gongbeat method of the Sarawak Malays" or verify his suggestion that the "paeonic and hemiolic rhythms" of the second Olympian and fifth Pythian odes were "probably overlain by musical rhythms, just as the tawak accompanies the drum and gong orchestra." Can he? I am not enough of an expert in those fields to estimate his numerous dicta about the teaching of mathematics, music, geography, and dancing. Is he? When I read his chapters on the pedagogy of language, history, and literature, where I have some slight experience, I am reminded of the physicist, the mathematician, and the geologist, each of whom thought Spencer's *First Principles* was magnificent in the two other departments, but "rotten" in his own.

In the matter of moral and religious education, we all deem ourselves competent. President Hall eloquently deplores the

world-wide modern relaxation of moral discipline, and affirms the necessity of supplementing moral by religious instruction. Unfortunately he has no religion, or rather no theology, to offer—nothing but “cosmic emotion,” which he refuses to “small down” with the Comptists to Humanity or with James and Fechner to the solar system. No pent-up Utica confines his Whitmanian religiosity. “I am a son of the sky and the nebulae; thence I came and into them I shall be resolved. To contemplate them is navel-gazing and saying ‘Om’ ” (Vol. I, p. 139). This is the religion of the “adult cultivated male intellect.” But the child’s soul imperatively requires more than this, and President Hall proposes to meet the demand by furnishing “a complete religious education on the recapitulatory theory,” from fetishism to pantheism. Neither ethical culture nor President Eliot’s religion of the future will suffice. Much that President Hall says on this point is forcibly put, but he overlooks an insuperable difficulty. The child’s soul also requires, above all things else, sincerity in its teachers, and is disconcertingly acute in the detection of affectation and pretense. There can be no true edification in religious instruction imparted or directed by those who believe only that it is a good thing—for the recipient. Those who, like President Hall, have themselves no theology, and yet distrust the adequacy of purely secular moral teaching, have but one recourse. They must hold their tongues and leave the work to be done by others.

Once more, it is quite impossible to do justice to the enormous mass of fact, opinion, and edifying comment assembled in these fourteen hundred pages. It is, for the insufficiency of my own vocabulary compels me to borrow that of the author, a “unique culture-bouillon,” “a nondescript mother-lye of the higher moral life.” If I nevertheless feel justified in dwelling as I have done on the conspicuous faults of the work, it is because they are precisely those to which the public is already most inclined and in which it ought not to be encouraged by a writer of President Hall’s ability and prominence. In the present condition of our schools and colleges there is not the slightest excuse for exalting sentiment above disciplined intelligence, and emotional impressionability above accuracy, or advocating greater laxity in the use and abuse

of the American language. "Who ever asked if the Blessed Virgin could read Greek?" A writer who employs these methods cannot complain of the reviewer who endeavors to give his gems appropriate setting.

President Hall ironically observes that his critics complain that he has no style. My complaint is that he has altogether too much. He is, in his own terminology, a "holophrastic idealist." He cannot say a simple thing in a simple way. He must rhapsodize about it for three or four pages. He must pile up useless synonyms and technicalities. He must bring in tags of languages which he has not learned, employ words of which he has forgotten the etymology, and which he or his proofreaders cannot spell, misapply or garble familiar quotations, and drag in far-fetched and irrelevant allusions to his desultory reading. He seems to think that "*modus vivendi*" means "manner of living," and that "*in petto*" means "on a small scale." He talks of "Romains" lectures, "N. Faguet of the French Academy," and Grote, "who swept away everything in Greece before the Doric invention" (*sic*) (Vol. II, p. 292). He continues of course to attribute to Plato and Aristotle propositions that would have made them gasp and stare. He credits Lowell with Burke's reported saying about the nodosities of the oak and the contortions of the sibyl. Latin is for him alternately the red rag to the bull and the candle to the moth, and always brings him bad luck in the shape of such forms as *floriant* and *feminia*. He wants to "*curriculize*" "*uncurricularized*" experiences, and talks familiarly of "*startaric*" reading, "*chrestomata*," and "*olegantropy*" (*sic*). The last must be something very horrid indeed, if, as he forewarns us (Vol. I, p. 429,) its "fit punishment is a barren life and a loveless old age." The phrasing and the syntax match the diction. "There is something in the cake-walk which seems to me the very apotheosis of human love-antics." Enjoyment of a work of art is "the acme of hedonic narcosis." The dancing of an elderly man is (Vol. I, p. 47) "the spontaneous senescent infection with the Terpsichorean spell." When President Hall is stirred by music, his soul is "vastated" and he "senses the vast encompassing phyletic environment." When he feels that he is making progress in the study of a new language he experiences

"the truest avatar of *Sprachgefühl*." The reader must divine for himself such syntactical riddles as (Vol. I, p. 428), "The number of children born of native American parents is now less than in any country of the world"; or (Vol. II, p. 286), "The percentage of juvenile crime is both increasing and becoming more precocious."

These observations will confirm President Hall's conviction that "the professors of Greek and Latin always tend to exalt form over content and substance" (Vol. II, p. 259). But an educator of his position and influence who in the present state of our schools systematically denounces accuracy and exalts undisciplined emotional expansion must expect dwellers in the opposite camp to scrutinize the practical outcome of his faith in his own works.